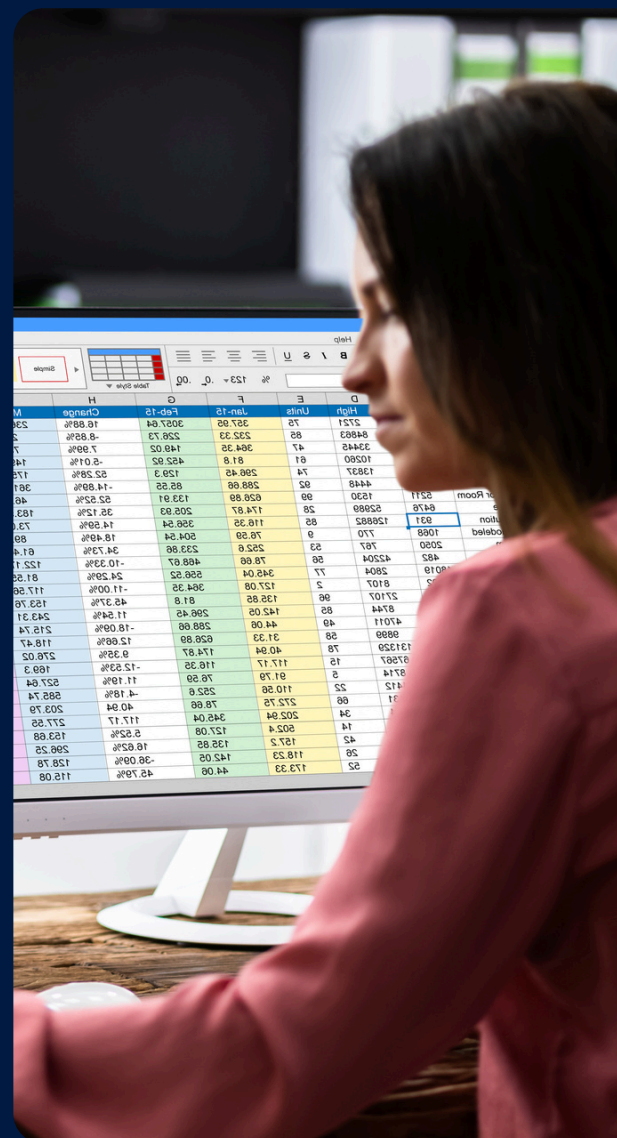


Whitepaper

Spreadsheets vs. GRC Tools: Elevating Risk & Compliance Management



Why legacy tools (e.g. Excels, emails) fall short—and how GRC tools empower efficient, transparent, and proactive risk management.

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Executive Summary

Risk and compliance are no longer administrative functions—they are core to building organizational trust, resilience, and competitiveness. Despite this shift, many businesses still rely on legacy tools such as Excel, email, and siloed systems that fall short in visibility, collaboration, and scalability.

This whitepaper outlines the risks of outdated approaches and explains how GRC platforms like CERRIX enable efficiency, transparency, and strategic advantage in governance, risk, and compliance management.



1

The Hidden Costs of Spreadsheets and Legacy Tools

1. Siloed Data and Limited Visibility

Spreadsheets and legacy systems are typically used in isolation, making it difficult to align risk registers with related data such as incident logs, audit results, or regulatory obligations. This lack of integration leads to **fragmented insights and reactive decision-making**. Without a holistic view, leadership may struggle to assess overall risk exposure in real time.

2. Poor Auditability and Traceability

Tracking changes, approvals, and historical decisions is risky in spreadsheets. Legacy systems only offer limited logging, making it difficult to meet audit requirements or demonstrate compliance to regulators.

3. Redundant Effort and Delayed Reporting

In many organizations, the same evidence is collected and submitted multiple times—for internal controls, compliance assessments, and audits—creating unnecessary duplication and inefficiency. The manual nature of spreadsheet-based reporting often means that **assessments are finalized months after the fact**, providing outdated information. A centralized GRC approach allows evidence to be captured once and reused across multiple assurance activities, improving efficiency and timeliness.

4. Manual Work and Risk of Human Error

Spreadsheets require significant manual effort for data entry, aggregation, and reporting—making the process time-consuming and error-prone. Without version control or a clear audit trail, tracking the history of risks and controls becomes difficult and often leads to inconsistent or outdated information. This not only hampers efficiency but also undermines the reliability of risk reporting.

5. Inconsistent Risk Methodologies

Without a centralized system, each business unit might define and assess risk differently, leading to fragmentation, confusion, and misaligned priorities.

6. Lack of Ownership due to scattered responsibilities

Because risk spreadsheets are siloed, business managers lack comprehensive overviews of their responsibilities. This leads to insufficient risk awareness among managers and, consequently, their teams.



7. Limited Scalability and Agility

As organizations grow, so does the complexity of their risk landscape. Spreadsheets cannot accommodate dynamic risk environments or support real-time updates across departments. Legacy systems often fail to keep pace with evolving regulatory frameworks or internal process changes.

2

When to Consider a GRC Tool

Adopting a GRC platform is a strategic step that often follows key business signals, including:

Signals

Considering a GRC tool

Growing Regulatory Demands

Managing multiple frameworks manually becomes inefficient and error-prone as compliance complexity increases. Multiple frameworks (e.g., ISO, DORA, ESG) require consistent control mapping, traceability, and documentation that spreadsheets struggle to support.

Business Growth or Scaling

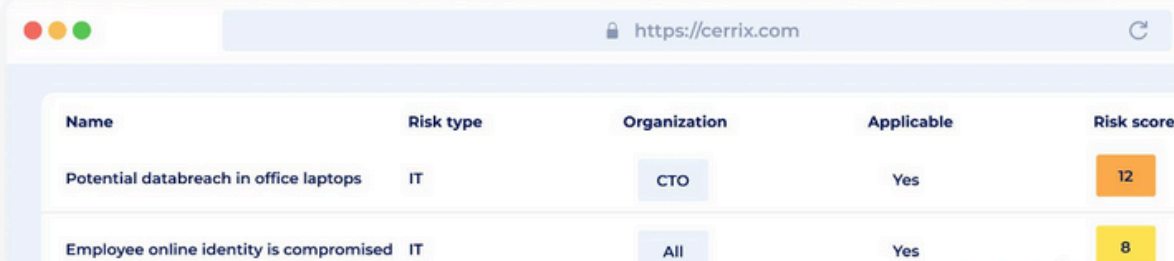
Expanding operations brings new risks that require standardized, scalable oversight beyond spreadsheets.

Audit or Regulatory Pressure

As expectations grow, teams must either scale headcount or invest in tools that automate and streamline key processes.

Need for Integrated Assurance

Coordinating risk, compliance, and audit functions requires shared data and workflows that spreadsheets can't support.



Name	Risk type	Organization	Applicable	Risk score
Potential databreach in office laptops	IT	CTO	Yes	12
Employee online identity is compromised	IT	All	Yes	8

3

From Spreadsheet to GRC Tool: Key Differences

Spreadsheets and legacy systems may have worked in the past—but the complexity of today’s regulatory and risk landscape calls for a smarter, more scalable solution.

○	Challenge with Spreadsheets
1	Siloed data, inconsistent risk methodologies; lack of integration
2	Poor Auditability and Traceability
3	Redundant Effort and Delayed Reporting
4	Manual Work and Risk of Human Error
5	Inconsistent Risk Methodologies
6	Lack of Ownership Due to Scattered Responsibilities
7	Limited Scalability and Agility



Advantage with a GRC Platform

- Centralized ecosystem with standardized risk taxonomy and workflows
- Maintain a complete audit trail of actions, risk assessments, and control changes
- Reuse evidence across audits, controls, and compliance tasks—automate reporting
- Automate workflows for testing, reporting, and approvals—reducing manual input and error
- Apply standardized risk taxonomy, scoring, and control design across the entire organization.
- Assign responsibilities, link owners to controls and risks, and provide real-time dashboards
- Scale easily across departments and frameworks with configurable modules and integrations

Modern GRC platforms empower organizations to transition from reactive to proactive risk management, reduce inefficiencies, and foster a culture of continuous improvement.

The capabilities outlined on the next page—ranging from automation to audit readiness—collectively address the core challenges posed by spreadsheets. While some GRC benefits solve multiple pain points, together they lay the foundation for greater resilience, accountability, and long-term success.



“I love how I can create dashboards tailored for specific teams. For example, I built a dashboard for our IT cluster that provides real-time updates on control tests linked to DNB Good Practice Information Security.”

– Barbara Bloeme, Menzis



4

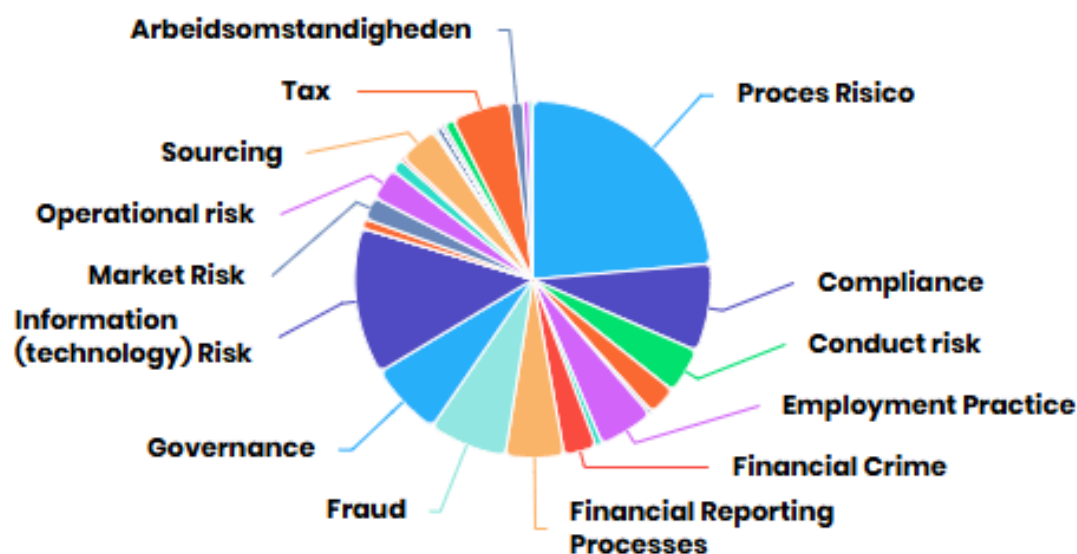
Benefits of Adopting a GRC Tool

1. Centralized Risk and Compliance Ecosystem

A modern GRC platform brings all governance, risk, and compliance activities into one integrated system—eliminating the fragmented, siloed approach that many organizations still rely on.

Unified Risk Taxonomy

Categorize all types of risks—strategic, operational, compliance, financial, and more—within a single, centralized system. This reduces duplication, ensures consistency, and provides a complete view of your organization's risk landscape.



Risk Taxonomy | CERRIX platform

Framework- Compliance Reporting

Link controls to multiple regulatory frameworks to track compliance status in real time. This enables seamless reporting and reduces the administrative burden of maintaining separate evidence trails for each requirement.

Assigned	Version	Last reviewed	Next review	Overall score	Export data
	1.0	12/02/2024	12/03/2024	■ In control	Export data
Statistics Requirements Assessments  					
Search...  Filter ☐ Open all					
Name	Last scored	Required score	Assessed score	Audited score	
1. General provisions	12/01/2024	■ Sufficient	■ Sufficient	■ Insufficient	
✓ Article 1: Subject matter	12/01/2024	■ Sufficient	■ Sufficient	■ Sufficient	
✗ Article 2: Scope	12/01/2024	■ Sufficient	■ Sufficient	■ Sufficient	
✓ Article 3: Definitions	12/01/2024	■ Sufficient	■ Sufficient	■ Sufficient	
✗ Article 4: Proportionality principle	12/01/2024	■ Sufficient	■ Sufficient	■ Sufficient	
2. ICT Risk Management	12/01/2024	■ Sufficient	■ Sufficient	■ Sufficient	

DORA (Digital Operational Resilience Act) | CERRIX platform

Audit-Ready by Design

A centralized system gives auditors direct access to first-line internal control documentation, enabling efficient audit planning and execution. This reduces preparation time for business units and enhances audit readiness across the organization.

About CERRIX

CERRIX is a SaaS platform specializing in Governance, Risk, Compliance, and Audit. By integrating all stakeholders onto a single platform, we embed compliance and risk management into the core of the organization while customizing solutions to meet the needs of specific audiences. Our focus on efficiency, automation allows us to centralize and simplify the GRCA management processes.

10+ years

GRC innovation

For over 10 years, CERRIX has been at the forefront of GRCA innovation. We support over 100 clients across over 20 countries, helping businesses enhance efficiency, collaboration, and control.

2. Automation and Efficiency

Modern GRC platforms streamline critical workflows such as **control execution, control testing, and evidence collection**—reducing manual workload and enhancing accountability.

Business teams can be assigned ownership of controls, including submitting evidence and assessing performance. This not only builds engagement but also fosters a stronger internal control culture. Standardized workflows ensure consistent execution across the organization, supporting higher risk maturity.

Efficiency is further achieved through reuse of submitted evidence across internal control, compliance, and audit processes—eliminating duplicate efforts and freeing teams to focus on core activities.



By automating your incident management process, ERM will get an overview of registered incidents.

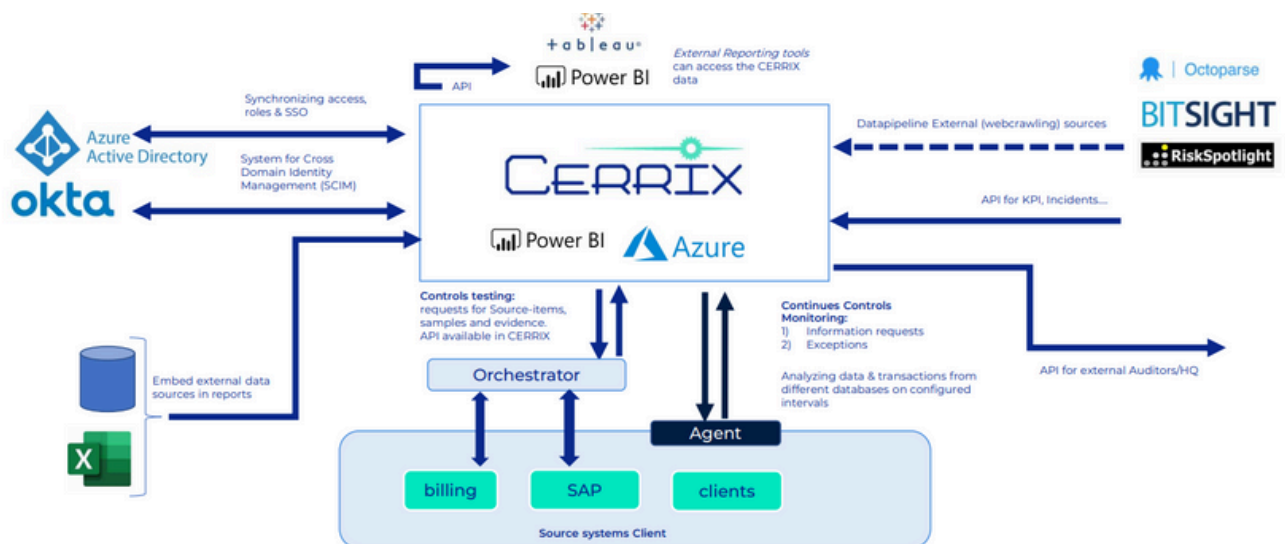


Action tracking | CERRIX Platform



Examples of automated workflows include:

- **Incident Management** : Automating incident registration and resolution gives risk teams real-time visibility into ongoing issues and supports faster resolution cycles.
- **Action Tracking**: Tasks are automatically assigned and followed up via reminders, ensuring accountability without the need for manual oversight.
- **Automated Reporting**: Dashboards and reports can be generated automatically, reducing errors and saving time. This allows teams to spend more time on insights and decision-making instead of data compilation.
- **Control Testing**: Control tests can be scheduled, assigned, and executed through a central workflow—ensuring timely and consistent assurance activities.



Workflow / CERRIX Platform

3. Real-Time Dashboards

Live dashboards provide a consolidated, real-time view of risk exposures, control effectiveness, and compliance status. These insights support informed decision-making, early issue detection, and more proactive risk management.

Whether tracking key metrics across departments or drilling down into specific risks, interactive dashboards help leadership stay ahead of emerging challenges.



CERRIX real-time dashboard

4. Compliance by Design

Modern GRC platforms embed compliance into day-to-day operations by mapping regulatory requirements directly to internal controls and tracking their implementation in real time.

Controls can be linked to multiple frameworks—such as ISO 27001, DORA, or NIS2—so that testing and evidence collection only need to occur once. This reduces duplication, simplifies reporting, and allows teams to focus on value-adding activities rather than administrative compliance work.

Organization

 Demo Organization / Group Mortgages / Operating companies / Mortgages The Netherlands / COO / Cre... 

Business dimensions

Edit Selection 

>  Processes

>  Business Objectives 4

Framework dimensions

Edit Selection 

>  ISO27002 (ENG)

>  * DORA - Digital Operational Resilience Act

>  NIS2 Security Measures for Essential Services

>  ISO 27001 (NL)

Link controls to multiple compliancy frameworks in CERRIX

5. Traceability and Accountability

In a modern GRC environment, every action is logged—ensuring organizations can clearly demonstrate who did what, when, and why. This is critical for both internal governance and external audit requirements.

As business managers take ownership of their risks, systems must provide transparency without compromising integrity. If risk scores are changed or previous assessments revisited, the full history remains accessible. Strong traceability helps identify both desired and undesirable changes, supporting a culture of accountability.

History Overview

 Reload

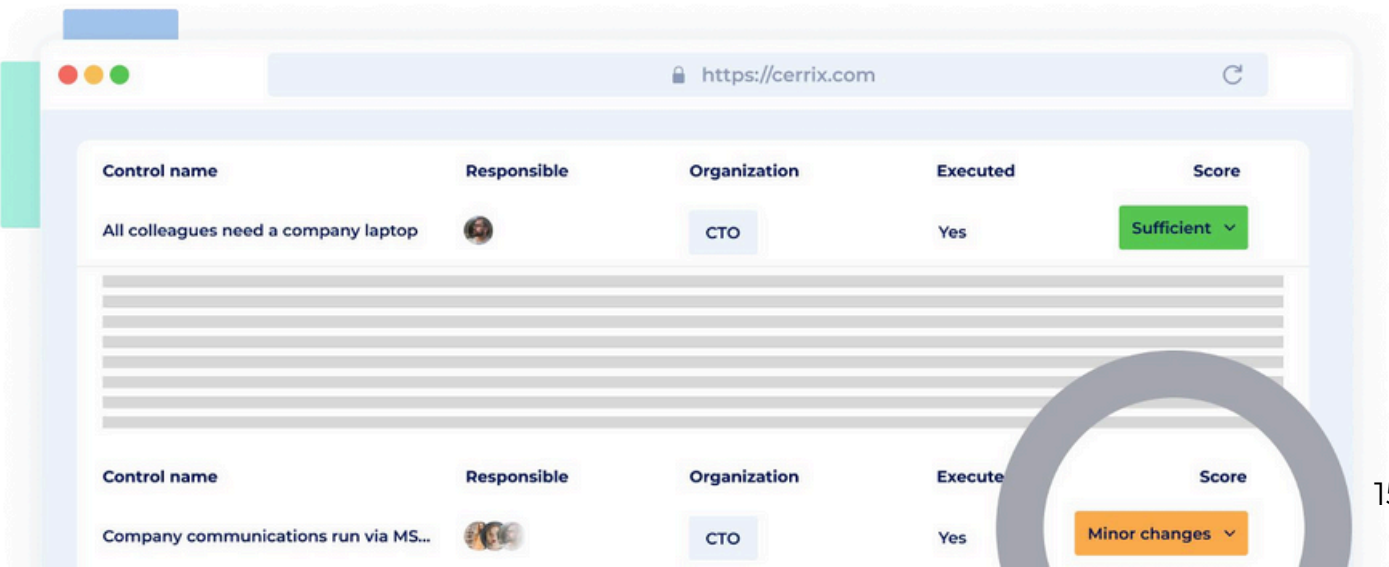
10-10-2024 14:50:06	Update by Andeweg, Ruben	
02-02-2023 11:32:37	Update by Toet, Maurits	
02-02-2023 11:32:34	Update by Toet, Maurits	
02-02-2023 11:32:30	Update by Toet, Maurits	
22-11-2022 13:40:10	Update by Stas, Dora	
22-11-2022 11:18:35	Update by Toet, Maurits	

History overview | CERRIX platform

6. Continuous Monitoring

A well-implemented GRC system fosters continuous monitoring, making compliance a driver of strategic advantage rather than a reactive obligation.

When issues are identified, actions can be taken immediately. These actions are tracked and managed centrally, enabling risk teams to adapt in near real time—whether weekly or daily—based on live data.



5

GRC Adoption Roadmap: From Fragmentation to Integration

Even a mature organization can start small and scale wisely.
Here's a practical adoption path:

01	Assess Current State	Identify pain points in your existing GRC processes, tools, and responsibilities.
02	Define Target Maturity	Set goals for consistency, automation, and assurance visibility across departments.
03	Select the Right Platform	Choose a scalable GRC solution that matches your current needs and future vision.
04	Pilot and Iterate	Begin with a focused area (e.g., internal control or DORA) to demonstrate value.
05	Expand and Optimize	Roll out across teams, align processes, and embed continuous improvement practices.

When selecting a GRC tool, it's common to encounter more features than initially expected. To avoid scope creep, it's essential to define a clear roadmap after your initial implementation. This roadmap helps align future functionality with your organization's risk maturity goals—ensuring focused adoption without unnecessary complexity.

Discover our Solutions



Risk & Controls management

Enable structured risk identification, assessment, and monitoring aligned with organizational risk appetite



Process management

Map, monitor, and assess processes to identify risks and implement controls effectively.



Incident management

Track and analyze incidents to implement corrective actions and improve processes via customized workflows



3rd party management

Assesses and monitors third-party risks, ensuring vendor compliance with organizational standards



Measures of Improvement

Measures of Improvement (Mol's) module, ensures that measures are taken to increase effectiveness of controls in CERRIX.



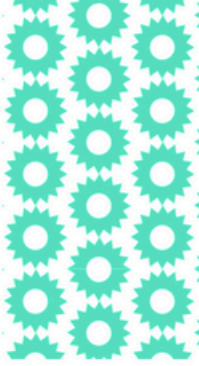
Audit management

Streamline internal & external audit planning, execution, and reporting with a focus on traceability and effectiveness



Metrics KRI/KPI

Provides data gathering for KRI and KPI for managers to response appropriately.



Have any additional questions or need more information?

Reach out to us

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Want the full guide?

[Download the whitepaper](#)